

Insights, News & Events

RETAIL WORKERS FACED RECORD-HIGH FATALITIES IN 2023, SPURRED BY WORKPLACE VIOLENCE: 10 STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO ADDRESS WORKPLACE DANGERS

Insights
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Recently released numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that over 300 workers in the retail industry were killed on the job in the most recent reporting year, the highest recorded number in at least the past five years. According to the December 19 government release, the leading cause of workplace fatalities was violent acts, accounting for 40% of all deaths. This Insight dives deeper into the numbers and provides retail employers with 10 steps you can take to help avoid workplace violence in the near year.

Workplace Fatalities Recap

Before we dive into industry-specific figures, here is an infographic providing some basic data across all fields for 2023. If you want to explore further, the raw data from the government can be found [here](#).

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WORKPLACE FATALITIES TOOK A TOLL IN 2023

5,283

fatal work injuries in the U.S. in 2023

3.7%

decrease from 2022

3.5 fatalities per 100,000

full-time workers

PAST YEARS:

2020: 4,764

2021: 5,190

2022: 5,486

2023: 5,283



HOW DID FATALITIES OCCUR?

1,942

Transportation

885

Falls, slips, trips

820

Exposure to harmful substances, environments

779

Contact incidents

740

Violent acts

104

Explosions and fires

FATALITIES IN SELECTED INDUSTRIES:

1,075

Construction

391

Manufacturing

306

Retail trade

265

Leisure and hospitality

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Retail Industry Detail

Diving deeper into the retail industry, the following infographic tells the tale of an industry that should take safety seriously.

FATALITIES IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY, 2023

306
fatalities

highest figure
in over five years

HOW DID FATALITIES OCCUR?

123

Violent acts

61

Transportation
incidents

53

Exposure to
harmful substances,
environments

40

Falls, slips, trips

22

Contact incidents

5

Explosions and fire

Incident numbers have increased the past five years –
with **violent acts** as most common cause



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What Can Retail Employers Do to Prevent Workplace Fatalities?

Here are a set of 10 recommendations to help retail employers prevent workplace violence at their worksites. OSHA also provides [specific resources related to workplace violence prevention](#) if you want a deeper dive on the subject.

1. Implement a Zero-Tolerance Policy for Violence

Establish and enforce a zero-tolerance policy for any form of workplace violence, including threats, harassment, or physical harm. Communicate this policy clearly to employees (in writing) and, if possible, to customers.

2. Train Employees to Recognize and Respond to Threats

Conduct regular training sessions on identifying warning signs of violence, de-escalation techniques, and when to call for help. Empower workers with the skills to stay safe under pressure.

3. Improve Store Security Systems

Install and maintain high-quality surveillance cameras, panic buttons, and alarm systems. Ensure these are operational and monitored at all times to deter criminal activity.

4. Provide Adequate Lighting

Ensure parking lots, entrances, and store interiors are well-lit to reduce the risk of assaults and robberies. Poor lighting can make employees and customers vulnerable.

5. Limit Access to Restricted Areas

Use key cards, locked doors, and security personnel to restrict access to sensitive areas like stockrooms, offices, and cash storage locations. Keep unauthorized persons out.

6. Hire Security Personnel or Services

Employ trained security personnel during high-risk times, such as late-night shifts, when employees are working alone, or special sales events. A visible security presence is an effective deterrent to violence.

7. Develop a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan

Outline clear steps for reporting workplace violence or threats, responding to violent incidents, including evacuation procedures, law enforcement notification, and post-incident support. Ensure employees know their roles.

8. Establish Safe Cash Handling Practices

Minimize cash on hand by using drop safes and cashless transactions. Train employees to never resist a robbery and prioritize their safety over property.

9. Foster Open Communication

Encourage employees to report suspicious behavior or threats without fear of retaliation. Act promptly on all reports to prevent escalation.

10. Collaborate with Local Law Enforcement

Build relationships with local police to get advice on crime trends, request regular patrols, and ensure quick response to emergencies. Law enforcement partnership enhances safety.

Conclusion

We will monitor developments in this area and provide updates as warranted. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. If you have any questions, contact the author of this Insight, your Fisher Phillips attorney, or any member of our [Workplace Safety](#) or [Retail Industry](#) groups.